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ABSTRACT

Free-lance librarianship is discussed, and retired librarians are urged to start their own information service as a business. Because computer based storage and retrieval systems are not socially, politically, or economically integrated, and one library cannot hold all information, new needs are emerging for information services. For example, a research paper is a new creation reflecting the information searcher's ability to gather facts, organize them effectively, and think independently. Information companies are described and hints are given for starting a new information business. A bibliography and index are attached. (Author/KP)

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SHELVED:
THE RETIRED LIBRARIAN'S GUIDEBOOK

by Jane D. Elder

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

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CHAPTER I

Do What You Know Best: The Free-lance Librarian

Don't let retirement scare you--you might just be starting to live. You can make the rest of your life more interesting by remembering you are well equipped technically. If you walked into a pickle factory, you might turn and run, but if you walked into a library, any library, you would know how to begin. Begin what? Haven't you been asked by friends through the years, "Can you do me a favor? My sister wants to know if her old Bible is a rare book, and how much is it worth?"

Free-lance librarianship is a way to make knowledge pay. Think of it. You are ready to go into business immediately. You have relatively little to invest. Possibly small classified advertisements in local newspapers, a business telephone listed in the white pages and an answering service may be all that you need.

In some states it may be necessary to secure a license. A written application to municipal authorities will require a minimal charge, but may help greatly when reporting expenses to the Internal Revenue Service, citing home use for business enterprises. Plan to make your Information Service a registered business. Good advice can be secured from the SBA (Small Business Administration) and SCORE (Service Corps of Retired Executives).

Many librarians feel that they want to get away from library materials forever. But the field of library science is so broad that they have probably never have had a chance to look into all its facets. If he/she has been in a small public library or a school library, resources have been limited, and many new "tools" have developed since they last saw library school. If he/she has been in a large library system, chances are they have been confined to a small segment of that organization.

At the expense of adding to the growth of publication, illogically piling the paper accumulation higher and higher, I rationalize my part in burying the world under literary information thus: Goethe's "Connect always connect" justifies my attempt. A combining of ideas, seems to say that there is something new under the sun. Research can uncover valid, statistical correlations between matters seemingly not related to one another and result in invention or discovery.

A good example is given by Paul Wasserman, who tells about the inception of LIST (Library and Information Services Today, 1971; an

International Register of Research and Innovation). A group of students and faculty collaborated in a problem-solving episode which resulted in the new publication listed above. Prior to this, no source existed for organizing the records and efforts in progress to keep those who were informed of new developments in their areas of interest. Wasserman blames library personnel for failing to keep up the activity it should be promoting.

This illustrates the point I wish to make concerning the growing burden of the businessman or bureaucrat who needs to use various kinds of information, and therefore, could use the services of an experienced librarian. Many queries require the use of microfilm, monographs, abstracts, reports, periodicals and newspapers. As an information officer, you, the free-lance librarian, select and produce what your client needs from the information explosion of the sixties and seventies. He will be grateful and willing to pay for the service. The search for answers may, in fact, be a new experience for a researcher, as new to him as it would have been to his client--so wide is the field of knowledge. How could life ever become dull, when one could not possibly anticipate what the next request might be? Giving up your job may open new doors and new accomplishments.

You do not think you will get any requests? Listen to what Max Gunther says:

> Everytime I write a book or a magazine article, I get stacks of letters from readers asking questions. Often the reader

> has gone to enormous trouble to find my address, or he has mailed his letter in care of the publisher and has wasted weeks for the letter to be forwarded and for me to reply (I always do reply, but often after a long delay and sometimes irritably). And all this time the answer to the reader's question lay waiting for him in his local library. . . I can only conclude that most people don't know how to use libraries.[1]

How many students manage to graduate from college without knowing basic fundamental tools is a mystery to us all. Many do not know how to use the card catalog or to distinguish between a research paper and a report. How many times have we heard a student ask for a bibliography when he means biography? And what high school librarian has not heard, "Hey, where's the friction at"? Years later, many of these same people, well on their road to financial success, are faced with problems; where should a new chain be opened?, or, what kind of construction is best for the climate of Arizona? Many businessmen do not know where to turn, nor have the time to be away from their company long enough to muddle through the library instruction that was passed over at the time, as being irrelevant. It is estimated that about only ten to thirty percent of the general population enter a library. Gallup polls indicate only about twenty-five percent of adults can name a book they have borrowed from a library. The poll concludes that seven out of ten adults do not use a library.

More management information and research is needed by small businessmen. According to Dun & Bradstreet statistics, business turnover and failures are due repeatedly to an absence of business management know-how. An emphasis upon factual analysis, business case studies and other pertinent data, searched through library materials and techniques, could save many a floundering enterprise. The average small-smalls in business have one owner or manager who must attempt to be his own superintendent, purchasing agent, sales manager, advertising manager, comptroller, treasurer and personnel director. Businessmen too often blame their failures on location or competition or increased taxes instead of the managerial problem. Many need assistance in pinpointing their particular trouble-spot.

In the case of a single researcher the communication channel would be to a single user, and therefore a personal relationship would help the free-lance librarian to screen out irrelevant material. As with computer program planning, one of the most difficult things to decipher, is what it is the questioner really wants to know. In a two-way dialog, there is the initial interview and the call-back which would save much unnecessary exploration. There are trade association magazines which are available to your prospective client, but he may be willing to pay for someone else to sift through the material for him. Trade associations often claim that they get material to members, but cannot get them to take the time to read the quantities of information.

For a new piece of time and an example, look into the field of

freelancing in librarianship. If it sounds unfamiliar, it is because little has been written about it. The articles that have been written concerning this endeavor seem to be an alternative for the new librarian in search of a position in the 1975 job market. The Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported what we all know. Here are the facts: employment in libraries, the bureau asserts, will grow more slowly over the 1970-1985 period than during the sixties. The BLS further states nearly one half of the women and one fourth of the men will retire by 1985. As a group, librarians are older than most professional people. This is small comfort to a graduating MSLS (Master of Science in Library Science) in a tight job market.

An illustration of a new survival technique, the independent researcher, appears as an article in a 1973 issue of Canadian Library Journal.[2] It concerns Susan Klement, a young librarian, who has been freelancing for three years. Ms. Klement has had to be on the defensive concerning her alternative to a steady job. She claims that she is prepared to sell a service because of the education and experience she has had. She is not selling information which does not belong to her in the first place, nor information which is free. She feels that she is the access to that free knowledge.

Many times, the article continues, a bibliography or an abstract is all that is needed. Ms. Klement is near a university and seems to receive most of her clients through word of mouth technique. She does object to doing research papers for students and never takes a client

when she knows there is a ready reference in the library. In answer to the question, "Could you not find some of these answers in one's own public library?", Susan's answer is "no". For in-depth research it would take too long for an inexperienced person. Often three or more libraries must be consulted before the question is answered.

The big advantage of independent work is flexibility of hours and concentration. One may work ten hours one day, and none the next. This brings us to the important question of fees. Ms. Klement's set fee is $12.50 per hour, at the time of this publication. She arrived at the figure by thinking that she would like to earn as much money as the average librarian, but takes into consideration that she isn't employed steadily eight hours a day. Expenses also must be included. There are transportation charges and home expenses. She has an answering service, which is one of the few requirements of free-lancing. She is listed in the white pages of the telephone book under her company name, Information Resources. It is registered at city hall as a normal business.

The above is the answer to one person's entrepreneurship. Each individual must assess his costs and decide how bound he will be to formulated policies. One can assume many hours will be spent on the telephone and interviewing, aside from the use of library media.

Interviewing has a technique of its own. A recent Ph.D. graduate from the University of Pittsburgh has written "Micro-counselling in Library Education",[3] which points to the seriousness of successful

interviewing. Librarians, recognize the interview as a primary source, but the researcher must be able to bring out the topic his client wishes to explore and then arrange the organization of material so that he may make the correct interpretations. Independent librarianship is not confined to retirees and people out of work. Many young people have joined the free-lancers by choice. They believe it is a fast growing business and are willing to give up security for freedom and innovation. Dr. Eugene Garfield, of the Institute of Scientific Information, says pay-libraries will be forced upon our country, because of the information explosion and technological advances. He does not take lightly the idea of tax-supported libraries giving away free scientific information in competition with for-profit information others.

This might be a good time to stop and reflect upon the different types of freelancing one might be called upon to do. There are times when the client will want a report of plain facts, most generally in the field of scientific research. Other researches are behavioral in nature and although most often benefit business management, the scope is limitless.

Small manufacturers cannot maintain complements of specialist as a rule; a single person generally must make a multitude of decisions--What products should be sold? What price should be quoted? How much, if any, should be spent upon advertising? All questions are ultimately answered of course, but success or failure depends on the correct answers. No one can foretell the future, absolutely, but a step in the

right direction is where you, the trained librarian, can strut; you can quote figures or site case histories that compare with the scope of a client's outlook. Your answers may cause the recipient to come to the point of asking the most important question relevant to his needs.

C. Wright Mills, American polemicist and sociologist, believed that the academic elite has a moral duty to help create a better society by actively expressing beliefs and moral values. He used what he called a "loose" method for research. He grants that one has a theory and a method, but the use of life experience will influence the note-taking, which often does not fairly represent the books that one has read, but the writer is incorporating his own ideas to stimulate new theories. In other words, the researcher is allowing his own imagination to apply what he is reading to the basic objectional level of a specific problem. From there the relationship of researcher and client pyramids into the functional level and thus to the terminal conclusion.

Many new needs for information services are emerging. Not all computer based storage and retrieval systems are socially, politically and economically integrated. Nor, can any one library be all-inclusive. A research paper is a new creation; it reflects the information searcher's ability to gather facts, organize them effectively and think independently. Valid conclusions must be presented. There are several steps to be used: (1) the topic the client wishes to explore

(2) the collection of information (3) the evaluation of the materials (4) the organization of the data that is going to apply and the summary. Because free-lance librarians offer person-to-person service in problem solving, negative feedback is essential. A dissatisfied customer is not good advertisement. An account is generally handled by one person and presented to the client on a documented paper.

Again, returning to the problems of the modern businessman, research may show a better way and a new direction in today's competitive market. Reflect upon the upsurge of "carry-out" foods. Quick food chains are sprouting like dandelions in May all over America. Customers munch fried chicken in the comfort of their livingrooms with the cheapest of entertainments--the television set, light or dark, like the fowl (no pun intended). One can insult the waitress and still get away without leaving a tip, and no dishes to wash either. Whether or not this boom can continue in the face of our shortage scares and admonitions directed at the "throw-away" society, will be up to another researcher in the days to come. Right now, I marvel at the sudden change brought about in the restaurant business resulting from a marriage of television ~~coupled with~~ and a liberated, working wife.

Almost all marketing decisions involve some opinion of the future. Forecasting is intangible and results are not easily measured. Revised sales territories, the change of the public image or reduction in certain product lines are some of the profits from marketing research. I am not suggesting that a librarian can do complete marketing research.

A great deal has to be known about a firm before an intelligent program can be put together. The researcher's role is to collect background information. Sometimes, unexpected results point to a new type of customer or a new way of advertising. And then again, it must be said, happenings make research superflous. A friend of mine, a small manufacturer, wondered if advertising did pay. He was moderately convinced when sales seemed to drop in the absence of advertising, but was suddenly astounded by the lack of sales during a newspaper strike. He got the message.

The Delphi Technique, as described by Kevin D. Reilly[4] is an approach whereby at least two groups are involved. Number one is the researcher, and number two the respondents who answer questions posed by the researcher. Sometimes the feedback is from secondary sources, other times from a questionnaire. Cannot you, the dispenser of information for years, see the role that you can play with for the rest of your life? The professional can rarely keep abreast of publications in his own field. Librarians have the task of making the connection between the great stores of recorded knowledge and recent materials, and the unknown users for whom they were intended. Is information a salable commodity, like the six-pack or the packaged cheese and crackers? How "free" are tax-supported libraries? The demands of an average patron are reasonable, but in-depth research questions go beyond normal "usage".

An information officer cannot sell information; as a librarian he

has been giving it away for years. The information is not his to give or sell. The free-lancer is only trading his knowledge of how to find the information when he reports for a fee. The material is available to all, but there are times when a client is more valuable where he is, than ferreting out references that may be found more quickly and efficiently by a trained librarian.

The debate concerning for-profit libraries and information services would not affect the small public library, nor the college library, but should refer to specialized research or information centers. Clients would be industrial managerialists who can afford a fee and not overload a tax-supported library. The Association of American Publishers has entered the great controversy concerning copyrights, and bills have been introduced in Congress calling for a commission to study methods of compensation for authors regarding the wholesale use of their books in libraries.

Annette Hirsch is president of Information Specialists, Inc. in Cleveland, Ohio. She claims that as head of a "maverick" fee-for-service information company, she handles only inquiries that require at least two hours of in-depth reference searching and data gathering. The company does not compete with the free library. She calls her service ancillary. Her clients are people who are glad to have a professional and are willing to pay for expertise in an unfamiliar situation. We [Information Specialists] will refer clients to the public library when we are fairly sure the information needed is in the reference

department. To further good public relations, Information Specialists, Inc. are beginning to see themselves as information therapists. Their clients spontaneously have shown gratitude in finding personal contact in this machine-oriented world; old fashioned though it be--none the less it is new. The business must be showing a need by the very fact of its existence. It is no longer possible to subscribe to the New York Times Information bank. There is a charge of $50.00 to $54.00 per hour which as been imposed recently. This may force the budgets of many academic and public libraries to cancel experiments in information retrieval. My crystal ball tells me that there will be more and more demand for individualized service.

Now, at the expense of causing many disagreements, and possibly some enemies, I wish to precipitate some thoughts about interlibrary loan and how a nationwide chain of Information Specialists could solve many problems. Interlibrary loan is a beautiful idea, but like everything else,it has been abused. No matter how lofty the original plan was, and sometimes is, it has reached a frustrating point of over-success. I rightfully say this when counting through the request slips that were returned to me (May 1975) at the great Library of Congress in Washington, D. C. I would say that almost one third of the books that I sent for, and some of the magazines were simply marked "not on shelf". Presumably, they were on interlibrary loan (or stolen). I collected data for this chapter over a period of two weeks and met the same defeat that users of circulating libraries face daily. A casual walk around the semicircle of scholars in the main reading room failed

to turn up anybody that looked as though he or she were pursuing the same subject that I was.

Because of the cost of books, resource sharing does make sense, but there must be a better way than mailing books around the country. It deprives the resident of materials rightfully belonging to him--and until the copyright issue is resolved, there are bound to be many paradoxes. Patrons are assured many times that the information they need will be in the reference department of a library; yet a borrower from the lending department sometimes finds that needed materials are in circulation. Naturally, the patron may not be permitted to take anything out of the reference department, but in certain cases, a person twenty miles or two hundred miles away can. In addition, interlibrary loan clears the shelves of sometimes urgently needed subjects sought for borrowers who have made the effort to search their own subjects. Timely materials are in demand everywhere at the same time. I toss this dilemma around only to press a point; that information experts could possibly extract the information needed without depriving others of the use of essential books.

But whether or not you agree, let us pursue the pros and cons of free-lance librarianship. For a young person, irregular income without fringe benefits would be a great deterrent, but for you, a retired librarian-what do you have to lose? Some people have to rehearse before they retire, but a librarian's entire profession has been a rehearsal. After retirement is not a good time to learn about retirement--a

holiday of endless holidays. When I am in the kitchen preparing a company meal, I am usually prepared for the worst of culinary disasters. In my profession, I like to feel that there are endless fields to turn to if library funds are cut, if paraprofessionals replace me or if circumstances force me to early retirement, and a new beginning is required. Who wants to be the caboose? Remember The Little Engine that Could, and retire to something, not from something.

As a member of the Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation, I once took a walking tour in an old section of the city where I frequently had shopped for groceries and hardware. I wondered what could be so great about this area. There were run-down houses, pizza parlors and fake facades for every shop imaginable. Suddenly, I realized our tour leader was directing our eyes continually to the second and third stories of these buildings. There, above sputtering neon lights, were handsome Victorian window frames, turret-like bay windows and interesting porches. So, one must look up as well as down at that lonesome road to R day.

Most products can be mass produced more cheaply and marketed more expediently than hand made items, although there are plenty of people who do turn their hobbies into profit making projects. However, I do believe the emphasis in the coming years will be concentrated upon services. Thurber once said, "So much has been written about everything, that it is difficult to find out anything about it". As an information officer you have a wide choice. You can be selective, as a retired

person, you can turn off between assignments when it suits you and travel off and on the job.

Flipping through the yellow pages of the telephone book brings a variety of names and services. One of the most interesting advertisements is a New York company called FIND/SVP which is an information clearinghouse. SVP (s'il vous plait) was started in Paris by Andrew Gavin; he then adapted the operation to the United States. Other names that seem to tell stories are PENNY PROJECTS, INFORMATION COUNSELORS, INFORMATION ACCESS, ENGINEERING DYNAMICS, INFORMATION RESOURCES, INFORMATION UNLIMITED, TECHNICAL LIBRARY SERVICE, to name a few.

Some companies charge by the hour (for as little as $15.00), other individuals have subscription fees and some businesses give a pre-bid lump sum basis. Still others have a graded information service, based upon the client's ability to pay.

Most people advertise in some way. Warner-Eddison Associates write a monthly column, "What Do You Want to Know", for a local paper. They do not receive payment, but merely repeat some of the questions they are asked, and figure that their column is a free advertisement.

When getting started in a new business of this nature, possibly as a one-man operation, it is wise to make a few preparations. A ready reference file is a must. It should designate where certain subjects can be found. It is almost certain the questions asked will take the researcher to large libraries and special libraries. A

classified file would be an important piece of equipment, along with a subject index. It has been noted that the companies mentioned above, do not store answers, but only index sources.

True, rather than a product, you are selling an intangible. This in itself is a challenge. But since your service is person to person, you can follow these four steps outlined by Abbott P. Smith:[5] (1) The letter of explanation, which does not need a reply (2) A phone call to the adressee within a reasonable length of time (3) A definite appointment (4) When you have a track to run on, close the deal. Which brings to mind, the famous saying of Will Rogers: "Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there."

The business of free-lance librarianship is relatively unexplored territory. A retired person presumably has a pension, social security and insurance, etc., and would not have to take the risks that a younger person would be forced to do. If he/she is 65, he would not be giving up hospitalization and other securities provided while working. Those of you who still want to say "no" to uninteresting jobs, can do so when R day comes, without feeling guilty. Remember, you have spent a lifetime acquiring your skills. They could provide an exciting retirement career.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. Max Gunther. Writing and Selling a Non-fiction Book (Boston: The Writer, Inc., 1973) p. 44

2. Sherrill Cheda. "The Free-lance Alternative in Librarianship", Canadian Library Journal, Vol. 30 (September, 1973) pp. 401-6

3. Elaine Jennerick. "Microcounselling in Library Education", Dissertation Abstracts International (October, 1974)

4. Harold Borko, ed. Targets for Research in Library Education (Chicago: American Library Association, 1973) p. 189

5. Smith, Abbott. How to Sell Intangibles (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1958)

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